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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on practical activities for incorporating children's literature and thematic activities in the curriculum to stimulate children's thinking and language. The paper includes a review of the current literature about literature-based programs and a thematic unit on dinosaurs developed across the curriculum at the kindergarten level. Subjects covered in the thematic unit include: letter recognition, language arts, math, social living, arts, physical education, story time, music and computer. The paper also presents activities in math, science/health, social studies, language arts, and arts for use with four trade books. Additionally, the paper reviews nine alphabet books which can be used in a variety of skill areas. Twenty references are attached. (MG)

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## THEMATIC-BASED LITERATURE THROUGHOUT THE CURRICULUM

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Increasingly, more teachers are moving to a literature-based program in which trade books are used for reading. Classrooms are inundated with books and children's work, such as labels, captions, and writing. Also, there is a great deal of research to support the notion that reading aloud develops a sense of story, prediction of plot, and understanding of characters. Teachers read aloud to primary grade children several times a day. Frequently, favorite stories are reread, are made into a big book, and are used in shared reading time with the whole class (Huck, Helper, Hickman, 1987).

What is a literature-based program? DeLapp (Hickman and Cullinan, 1989, p. 222) noted that the essential features of a literature-based program are the following:

1. Children are read to on a daily basis.
2. Children have time to read books of their own choosing.
3. Children discuss and reflect upon the books they read.
4. Children respond to books through writing, art, drama, music, and talk.
5. Children write on topics of their own choosing.
6. Children share their reading, writing, and art products with the entire class.
7. Children use a variety of good books as an essential part of any theme or unit of study.
8. The daily schedule is flexible.

This paper will focus on incorporating children's literature and thematic activities in the curriculum to stimulate children's thinking and language. To this end, a review of current, related literature about literature-based programs was completed. Then the project of developing a thematic unit on dinosaurs, a topic stimulating to children, was undertaken and developed across the curriculum at the kindergarten level. Both are included in this paper.

Hill (1985) studied four students in a literature-based program. These children read two books per week, one of which was discussed with the teacher. The other was used in group discussion. The teacher monitored interactions and interests of the students. She found that better readers focused on literary analysis and personal response while the struggling reader focused mainly on recall of content. Better readers gained a wealth of knowledge.

Literature is a very important tool in the education of young children. Those who are exposed to good literature at an early age develop expanding schema and grow to love reading as well. Children who actively absorb good literature develop a background of experience that facilitates future learn-

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ing. In the process, children reap many benefits: concept development, ability to read, expansion of prior knowledge, as well as improved writing and speech.

According to Janet Hickman (Frith and Roser, 1983) teachers who show an interest in books usually talk about books they like. This in turn helps children become interested in books. Often good literature is relegated for use only in the time that is left after the basal reader has been "covered", basals which frequently contain very little text of literary quality. This is due to the already full "skill load" imposed on teachers.

Cullinan (1987) found that students who were exposed to literature developed rich language because their students' thought was modeled on words and phrases assimilated from literature. She noted that most children know the stories they like, they have a certain scheme or "sense of story". This enabled them to take an interest in literature brought to the classroom. Students notice a teacher's attitude toward literature through oral reading, group reading, and shared reading. Exposure, therefore, has many sources.

Teachers can incorporate literature into the curriculum by focusing on children's schema. A variety of books can be brought into the classroom to stimulate children to communicate. Teachers should model reading as a pleasurable experience. One way to do this is to read aloud enthusiastically to students daily (Maniey, 1988).

According to Restrepo (1988) children who read literature can develop meaning. Moreover, they are able to recognize the bond between reading at school and reading out of school. Students learn to appreciate and understand literature when it is used creatively alongside the basal. Restrepo suggests the following sequence for use of literature with the basal. First, plan a variety of teaching methods for your curriculum. Second, let children have choices about which topics are taught. Third, include books on different levels of reading as well as magazines, newspapers, and library materials. Fourth, provide a stimulating environment with free reading time. Fifth, help students become higher level thinkers. Lastly, an important recommendation is that the teacher model reading in a positive manner.

Teachers show students that they are interested in books by talking about their favorite books. In addition, teachers can help students become interested in literature and books by setting up centers in the classroom. These centers might deal with a wide variety of children's books yet have a unifying element, books written by the same author, noted Hickman. (Frith and Roser, 1983).

Lee Galda and Arlene Pillar (Frith and Roser, 1983) suggested that teachers should encourage children to read literature just for pleasure. Later the children can use their imaginations in activities prepared by the teacher. Teachers can then encourage students to use their talents and their minds to respond to various types of literature.

Teachers are very important in making literature-based programs succeed in schools. Sister Regina Alphonso (1987) stated that teachers should allow students to read as much from real life literature as from basal texts. In

many real life stories, there are interesting plots and themes written with simple text. Children relate to the vocabulary since it is much like that which they use in every day life. They are not bombarded with chopped words or repetitive words that make them wonder if people really speak in such a manner. Further, she noted that students enjoy books with humor. These can be used to enliven a basal oriented curriculum.

It has been well documented that there are many different ways to incorporate books into the curriculum. It should be noted that children's preferences are basic to the implementation of any literature program. Another suggestion to use familiar stories or books was given by Reilly (French, et al., 1989). Find different rendition of the same book. Read each rendition to the class. Compare and contrast details and characters on a matrix. Next, let students discuss their favorite renditions and why they prefer them. Students will gladly assume the roles of characters from the book.

Some suggestions to keep in mind when using literature in the content areas follow (Brozo and Tomlinson, 1986). First, identify important concepts that can be developed further. For example prejudice is an important concept that is hard to find in basals. Second, identify appropriate trade books to help teach concepts. Third, let children experience trade books before reading the text. Fourth, try to bring the text and the trade books together. Students could write about historical figures, pretending to be that fictional character. Fourth, students can reenact scenes from the trade book or text. Students who participate in activities of this nature find reading interesting, memorable, and comprehensible.

Children can be exposed to literature in many different fashions. Curriculum area learning seems to be the most popular. Literature can be broken into themes to use for teaching in the content areas. Using apples to teach the different skill areas is one such theme. Bainter (1988) used the theme apples in language arts to determine characteristics, find ways to eat them, and for discussion topics. He suggested making mobiles out of paper apples, or cooking apples to make juice, jello, and sauce. In movement, or physical education apples were used in games like: "Apple, Apple, Who Has The Apple?" In math children could practice counting apple seeds, discuss fractions, and graph their favorite apples on a chart. All of these activities allow children to experience literature in a variety of ways and to have fun while learning. A survey was administered to teachers of third and fourth grades to determine if teachers did use recommended procedures and practices in implementing children's literature (Blass and Jurenka, 1987). Questionnaires were sent to 600 teachers. Of these, 219 questionnaires were returned. Findings were that literature was used in 37 percent of the classrooms. Daily activities included independent silent reading; weekly activities entailed or reading by the teacher, library trips, and using books in the classroom library. Most activities were done on a monthly basis, namely, book reports, poetry, discussions, storytelling, research, reading parts of books, book club, art, new endings, changing collection of books in room. Those used on a yearly basis were records, special places to read, library center location changed, plays, campaigns, literature-based centers, and public library programs. Movies, tapes, and board games were a few activities never used in the classroom.



Glaser (Hickman and Cullinan, 1989) recommended that in preparing guides for use with trade books the following format might be considered: 1) Summary, 2) Objectives, 3) Journal Writing Suggestions, 4) Prereading discussion/activities, 5) Discussion questions/activities, 6) Follow-up activities, and 7) Further reading.

Many teachers are using literature on a daily basis in their classrooms. The following are books that can be used across the curriculum to enhance learning through engagement in real life situations. Gruber and Surdovai (1986) made a chart of four books and listed activities in the content areas. These include:

1. Sylvester and the Magic Pebble by William Steig

- Math:** Comparison of sizes can be taught with a collection of different sized pebbles.
- Science/Health:** discuss animals and their adaptations to weather conditions.
- Social Studies:** students role play being lost and discuss the feelings of people who care.
- Language Arts:** Write a story to your parents explaining how you became a rock.
- Art:** Draw a picture of what you would wish for if you had a magic pebble.

2. The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

- Math:** Discuss the size comparisons of the caterpillar
- Science/Health:** Discuss and compare the diet of the caterpillar. Determine whether or not he ate foods from the basic food groups.
- Social Studies:** Role play a shopping adventure to find the caterpillar's food.
- Language Arts:** Students arrange circles in alphabetically in order to create a caterpillar.
- Art:** Students use illustrations from the collage.

3. Ox-Cart Man by Donald Hall

- Math:** Students buy from a store of today and from a store of the past, then compare prices and packaging.
- Science/Health:** Students discuss manufacturing of the past and present.
- Social Studies:** Make a bulletin board to illustrate how travel has changed.
- Language Arts:** Children illustrate sentences from the book in booklet form.
- Arts:** Students take part in making crafts such as embroidery and cross stitching.

4. The Little House by Virginia Lee Burton

- Math:** Students draw city and country buildings and specify dimensions

- Science/Health:** Make a calendar to illustrate change of seasons that the little house experienced.
- Social Studies:** Make a chart which illustrates the differences between the city and the country.
- Language Arts:** Discuss how the little house felt about the changes.
- Arts:** Students make a diagram of the city or the country using models.

Alphabet books are a good source of literature. They can easily be used by teachers in many skill areas over a period of time. Through engagement in this activity students will discover that pleasure can be found in words (Ohanian, 1987).

Ohanian (1987) further suggests that many books can be used in different skill areas. She lists a number of books from a variety of content areas. Books of this nature are easy to find at public libraries or at local bookstores.

#### Thinking:

I Unpacked My Grandmother's Trunk by Susan Ramsey Hoguet.

- . Provides a memory game for children. They practice adding to a list of objects taken from the trunk.

D is for Duck by Mary Elting and Michael Folsom

- . Lets the students invent answers to why certain letters stand for certain animals.

#### Social Studies:

Ashanti to Zulu by Margaret Musgrove

- . Allows students to learn about tribes in Africa, African customs and language.
- . Archabet: An Architectural Alphabet by Balthazer Korab
- . Describes the structure of buildings alphabetically.

#### Arts:

Fantastic Alphabets by Jean Larcher

- . Allows children to design their own optical illusions.

Alphabet Arts by Leonard E. Fisher

- . Describes thirteen different alphabets in use today.

#### Science:

Apricot ABC by Miska Miles

- . Discusses animals and their habitats: crisis and resolution.

A Wildflower Alphabet by Elizabeth Cameron

- . Encourages children to use the alphabet to work through any science topic.

Language Arts:

A for the Ark by Roger Duvoisin

- . Discusses animals and their relationships aboard the ark.

ABC: Alphabet Rhymes for Children by Edward Lear

- . Uses rhyming in nonsense form to stimulate thought.

Teachers frequently fail to realize that books are an excellent resource when introducing math skills. For example, Freight Train by Donald Crews can be used to teach classification of different types of railroad cars, their color, shape, and sizes. Comparison is taught by studying cars at different locations. Ordering, one-to-one correspondence, and cardinal number concepts can be taught as well. Number recognition and conservation of number can be determined as well (Harsh, 1987).

Medina (1986) recommends story telling across the curriculum. Students enjoy listening to and telling stories. They become involved readily in story telling by participation, adding refrains, filling the gaps, adding to stories that have already been stated or telling true life stories. Incorporating literature into the curriculum takes much time and preparation. However, students participate in activities that are interesting and enjoyable. Many students are stifled by basal lessons. They become more interested when teachers take the time to bring additional books into the classroom. This ensures that the "vitality and spirit inherent in content area materials is kept alive." (Brozo and Tomlinson, 1986, p. 293)

In reviewing literature on literature-based programs across the curriculum, it has become evident to these reviewers that teachers are experiencing considerable success with these programs. Looking at models of thematic units it has become apparent to us that one of the most rewarding ways to teach is to begin with a thematic idea and then plan ways in which students, books, ideas, activities may interact. This has been done in the following unit on dinosaurs. The following thematic unit is designed for kindergarten students across eight subject areas.

## A THEMATIC UNIT ON DINOSAURS

### Kindergarten Level

#### Letter Recognition

1. Discuss the formation of "Dd". Is it like the shape of any Dinosaur? Let students form "Dd" with their bodies.

2. Let students find upper case and lower case "Dd"s on small dinosaurs. These dinosaurs have random letters written on them as well as "Dd"s.
3. Draw a dinosaur on the board. Use it as a map. Let students name things that begin with "Dd"s. Write these words around the dinosaur.
4. Hand out small dinosaurs with pictures on them to all students. Whoever had a picture with a "Dd" picture on it must do the Dinosaur Dance.
5. Make up riddles about dinosaurs and "d" things. For example, there once was a dinosaur who loved to eat. He especially liked "d" things. His favorite food was a round thing with a hole in the middle. What did the dinosaur like?
6. Play a game called Dinosaur Dungeon. Students all wear dinosaur tags. Each tag has a letter of the alphabet on it. One child does not wear a tag. He is known as the Dungeon Deputy. He must choose all of the dinosaurs with "d" on their tag.
7. Play the Dinosaur Dilemma. One child is chosen to be a Dinosaur Drifter.  
The Drifter must drift through a maze of children. He is trying to get out of this dilemma. His only way of getting out is to name as many things as he can that begin with "Dd".
8. Set up a dinosaur box filled with delectable dinosaurs. This box is filled with dinosaur shaped cookies. Each time a "d" is pulled from the box, a child gets a delectable treat.
9. Dying Dinosaurs is a partner game. Each child is paired with a partner. One pretends to be the dying dinosaur. The only way to remain alive is to think of six things that begin with "d" and say them aloud.
10. In Dithering Dinosaurs each child receives a dinosaur with a word printed on it. The child must say his word before time runs out and the dithers set in.

### Language Arts

1. Create a dinosaur using pieces that are cut apart. The directions are to put the pieces in alphabetical order. (Gruber and Surdoval, 1986)
2. Role-play a conversation between two dinosaurs. The teacher writes down the conversation. Discuss what was said.
3. Let students write words to describe dinosaurs. Next, they can draw pictures to illustrate their word.
4. Students can match dinosaurs that look alike using pictures. Then they can describe the dinosaurs.
5. The class can write a collaborative poem describing dinosaurs. Use features such as teeth, tail, size, color, and others as stimulate brainstorming.
6. Let students make dinosaur prints on paper. Students then write about the dinosaur to whom the print belonged.
7. Make a chart with the pictures of dinosaurs
8. Let students follow dinosaur directions, for example, take two dinosaur steps and pretend you are a hungry dinosaur. Discuss how the students felt at the time they were acting.
9. Set the scene back to the time of the dinosaurs. Let students role play different dinosaurs. Write sentences on the board to describe students' actions. Discuss the sentences.
10. Use mapping to describe dinosaurs of yesterday and dinosaurs of today. If dinosaurs were living today, would they survive, where would they live? Others.



## **Math**

1. Match dinosaurs in one-one-correspondence with their foods.
2. Categorize dinosaur models according to size.
3. Draw a big stegosaurus. Put numbers on some of his spikes. Students must fill in the missing numbers.
4. Match dinosaurs with numbers on them with the correct amount of plants.
5. Make a big dinosaur. Cut out windows in various spots on his body. Put simple addition problems on the dinosaur. The answer can be found by looking through the window above the problem.
6. Count the number of dinosaurs that are hidden in the picture.
7. Students can practice making sets with dinosaurs.
8. Students can put dinosaurs with numbers with them in the correct numerical order.
9. Students can practice spatial relationships: in, out, around, through, and next to by moving dinosaurs around model scenery.
10. Hand out dinosaur shapes with numbers on them. Students must find the dinosaur that matches their number.

## **Social Living**

1. Play the narration part of an album, "Our Dinosaur Friends."  
Discuss the story. Let students pretend to be dinosaurs and retell the story.
2. Discuss Tyrannosaurus Rex. Practice his body movements. Discuss and practice his actions.
3. Discuss stegosaurus. Practice his movement. How would it feel to be he?
4. Discuss Triceratops. Compare his features with the other dinosaurs on the chart.
5. Discuss Pteranodon/Pterodactyl. What creatures of today do they resemble?
6. Discuss Brontosaurus. Describe his appearance. Why did he sound like thunder?
7. Compare Ichthyosaurus to sea animals of today. Use a map to chart the likenesses and differences.
8. Compare Elasmosaurus to other water dinosaurs. Role play what it would be like to be a dinosaur in the water.
9. Compare Dimetrodon to lizards of today. Use a chart with pictures.
10. Review all of the dinosaurs studies. Assign each student a certain dinosaur. Let them pretend to live in the age of the dinosaur.
11. Use Prehistoric Play located in Weekly Reader Dinosaur Teaching Kit, 1989, Field Publication.

## **Arts**

1. Paint a dinosaur.
2. Draw a triceratops hatching out of its egg.
3. Make a booklet of dinosaurs. Cut out shapes of dinosaurs, bind them together, and write about each one.
4. Make a dinosaur diorama.
5. Make dinosaur stick puppets. use these to sing songs or when pretending.
6. Create a collage using dinosaur scenes from books and posters.
7. Choose a favorite dinosaur. Draw the dinosaur in its surroundings.

8. Make dinosaur prints out of plaster.
9. Glue parts together to make a dinosaur.
10. Draw a picture that shows how dinosaurs evolved.

### Physical Education

1. Dinosaur and Bone: One child turns his back to the class. His bone is placed near him. Another child tries to steal the bone without another child hearing him. If the dinosaur hears the child, he must turn and make a dinosaur sound. ("Dog and Bone")
2. Dinosaur Directions: One child is chosen to be the dinosaur. He must give directions to the other children using the rules of "Simon Says".
3. Dinosaur Dancing: Students pretend to be dinosaurs. They must dance as they think a dinosaur would have danced.
4. Mr. Dinosaur: One child is the dinosaur. Other children must wake up this sleeping dinosaur. As they walk toward him the children chant "Mr. Dinosaur wake up . . . ." The dinosaur wakes up when he is ready, then tries to tag as many children as he can.
5. Steal the Dinosaur: Place a plastic dinosaur in the middle of the playing area. Set up two teams on either side of the middle. Each player is assigned a number. When a number is called, the players with that number must run to the middle and try to steal the dinosaur. ("Steal the Bacon"). Nichols, (1986).
6. Dinosaur Walk: Set up two teams. Each team must do the dinosaur walk to the target and back. The first team to finish wins the game.
7. Dinosaur, Dinosaur, where is the dinosaur? Use model dinosaurs. Children close their eyes. The teacher takes one of the dinosaurs out. Children try to figure out which dinosaur is missing and where it could be hiding (Bainter, 1988).
8. Be a Dinosaur: Children pretend to be dinosaurs. They move and perform actions like dinosaurs. The only stipulation is to remain in one's own space.
9. Dinosaur Ding: All children start with a partner. Each pair of dinosaurs must listen for the ding. When the ding is sounded, dinosaurs must change partners (Nichols, 1986).
10. Dipping Dinosaurs: Children pretend to be dinosaurs. Dinosaurs dip every time they pass another dinosaur's path.

### Story Time

1. Dinosaur Story by Joanne Cole describes several dinosaurs, where they came from, and how they died.
2. Dinosaur Time by Peggy Parish describes the different kinds of dinosaurs found during dinosaur time.
3. Giant Dinosaurs by Erna Rowe illustrates dinosaurs and their sizes. It also points out where dinosaurs could be found.
4. The Berenstain Bears and the Missing Dinosaur Bone by Stan and Jan Berenstain let students enjoy the adventures of the Berenstain Bears. The bears are hunting for a missing dinosaur bone in the Bear Museum.
5. Little Danny Dinosaur is an easy reader. It discusses the feelings of a little dinosaur. Danny wants to be big, but he soon realizes that big is not always best.
6. The Big Little Dinosaur by Darlene Geis discusses a little dinosaur in search of his family. The little dinosaur meets many other dinosaurs in

his search.

7. Danny and the Dinosaur by Syd Hoff tells the story of a little boy and the friend he makes at the museum.
8. The Dinosaur and the Dodo by Annie Decaprio tells the story of a dinosaur who wants a friend but cannot find one. Finally, the dinosaur finds a friend in a dodo bird who is extinct like he.
9. Quiet on Account of Dinosaur by Jane Thayer tells of a little girl and her finding the last dinosaur in the world.
10. Dinosaur Alphabet Book by Pat Whitehead describes dinosaurs and their world through the use of letters of the alphabet.

### Music

These songs were taken from LACUS 6 and LACUS 7. The teacher sings the songs along with the students. She can make copies of the songs for the students to keep.

1. "Tyrannosaurus Rex" (Tune: "Four and Twenty Blackbirds")

Tyrannosaurus Rex walking all alone.  
He had no friends to call his own.  
He was mean and frightful.  
No one needed him.  
So off he stomped to the swamp,  
Looking for a friend.

2. "Stegosaurus" (Tune: "London Bridge")

The Stegosaurus had bony plates,  
Bony plates, bony plates,  
The Stegosaurus had bony plates,  
All on his back.

The Stegosaurus had four long spikes,  
Four long spikes, four long spikes,  
The Stegosaurus had four long spikes,  
All on his tail.

3. "Triceratops" (Tune: "Farmer in the Dell")

The Triceratops, the Triceratops,  
He had three long, long horns,  
All on his head.

4. "Brontosaurus" (Tune: "Mary Had a Little Lamb")

Bronty was a dinosaur,  
A dinosaur, a dinosaur,  
Bronty was a dinosaur,  
Who lived in a swamp.

Bronty ate lots of plants,  
Lots of plants, lots of plants.  
Bronty ate lots of plants,

To grow big and strong.

5. "Five Pteranodons"

Five little Pteranodons sitting in a tree,  
Teasing Mr. Tyrannosaurus,  
"You can't catch me, you can't catch me!"

Along came Mr. Tyrannosaurus,  
BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!  
He ate one Pteranodon and then four were left.

The next group of songs was taken from the album, "Our Dinosaur Friends for the Early Years". Lyrics for the album are on the album sleeve. It includes the following:

"My Name is Stegosaurus"  
"Pterodactyl"  
"Brontosaurus,"  
"Triceratops"  
"Tyrannosaurus Rex"  
"Dinosaur Friends"

Computer Program:

Dinosaur Discover Kit Computer Program, (IBM, Tandy, Macintosh),  
First Byte, Preschool - grade three. The computer kit contains: a  
Coloring Book, a Dinosaur Match, and a Story Maker.

Publisher: First Byte, Electronic Arts, 1820 Gateway Drive, San  
Mateo, CA 94404. (800) 245-4525

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#### ALBUM

"Our Dinosaur Friends for the Early Years." Album Distributed by American Testing Aids.

32A 10/1/88  
10/1/88